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# Green Facts

## Ways to Reduce Your Contribution to Smog

Smog is the direct result of human activity - air emissions from our homes, businesses and vehicles. You probably don't realize how many of your daily activities contribute to air pollution. There are a number of things you can do to reduce air emissions:

- **Conserve Energy:** Ontario's energy comes from a mix of sources including gas, oil and coal-fired generators that emit pollutants.

- **Minimize Your Energy Use:** Avoid leaving on lights and computers when you're not in the room, and think about doing things like hang-drying your clothes instead of putting them in the dryer. Air conditioners are among the most energy-consuming appliances. Turning them up even one or two degrees leads to a significant reduction in the electricity they consume. Installing a programmable thermostat and using energy efficient appliances can also make a difference.

- **Reduce Car Use:** Emissions from cars, trucks and buses contribute greatly to Ontario's smog problem. Walk, cycle, car pool or take public transit whenever possible. Walking instead of driving is good for your health as well as the environment.

- **Drive Cleaner:** Keeping your vehicle properly tuned and maintained improves fuel efficiency. By not idling your vehicle and observing speed limits, you can reduce fuel consumption and pollutant emissions.

- **Use Air Friendly Products:** Avoid using aerosol sprays and cleaners, oil-based paints, pesticides and other chemical products that contribute to poor air quality indoors and outdoors. You can also look for the EnerGuide ratings on appliances and for the federal government's eco-logo on consumer products.

On days when the Ministry of the Environment issues a smog advisory, reducing emissions is especially important, so do your part:

- Leave your vehicle at home; find another way to get to work.

- Teleconference instead of driving to meetings.

- Limit car trips you take by doing all your errands at once. Don't let your car idle.

- Conserve electricity at home by adjusting the heat or air conditioner and turning off lights you are not using.

- Avoid using aerosol sprays and cleaners, and oil-based paints.

- Limit your use of gas-powered small engines such as lawn mowers, chainsaws and leaf blowers. Gas mowers create as much pollution in an hour as a car driving several thousand kilometres.

*Protecting our environment.* Ontario

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# Air Quality

Local air quality affects your health and can change from day to day. It is important for you to be aware of the quality of the air around you and to understand the impacts it can have on you and your family.

The Ministry of the Environment provides current air quality information and makes it accessible and easy to understand. The ministry samples and analyses air across Ontario continuously and reports air quality readings to the public using the Air Quality Index, or AQI.

The AQI is a scale that ranges from 0 to 100+, divided into five categories. A low AQI rating means air quality is generally good and a high rating means the air quality is poor. The AQI measures up to six air pollutants, the most prevalent among them being ground-level ozone and fine particulate matter.

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|---|---|
| 0-15 | Very Good |
| 16-31 | Good |
| 32-49 | Moderate |
| 50-99 | Poor |
| 100+ | Very Poor |

**What do we measure?**
Ozone is formed at ground level when pollutants emitted by cars, refineries, chemical plants and other sources react chemically in the presence of sunlight. Ground-level ozone is a harmful pollutant, and must not be confused with the protective ozone in the upper atmosphere which shields the earth from the sun's ultraviolet rays.

Small particles in the air, known as fine particulate matter, pose a health concern because they can pass through the nose and throat and get deep into the lungs. Such particles are a product of combustion, when fuels such as coal, oil, diesel or wood are burned. Particulate matter comes from the emissions of everything from power plants to wood stoves and motor vehicles. Particulate matter also comes from wind-blown dust, brake-lining and tire wear.

If the ministry anticipates widespread and persistent poor air quality with the AQI going above 49 within 24 hours, it will issue a smog advisory and will outline some "best practices" that you should adhere to on a poor air quality day.

For more information on air quality, visit: www.airqualityontario.com.